Reading the Manzanar Landscape

After the war, the government removed most of the structures, and buried gardens and basements. As time passed, Manzanar was further buried, both in sand and in memory. Today, when visitors see Manzanar, they may think there's nothing out there. Yet for those who learn to read the landscape, the place comes to life. A pipe sticking out of the ground becomes a water faucet where children splashed their faces in the summer heat. A foundation reveals the shoe prints of a child who crossed the wet cement. Ten iron rings embedded in a concrete slab evoke the humiliation of ten women forced to sit exposed next to strangers, enduring private moments on public toilets.

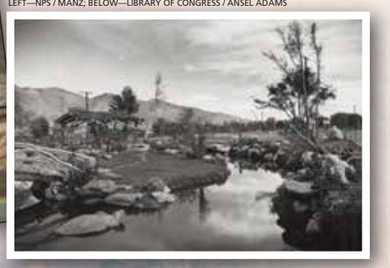
Whether driving the 3-mile self-guiding tour or exploring Manzanar on foot, visitors can see a number of Japanese gardens and ponds. People built gardens to beautify the dusty ground outside their barracks. Others built larger gardens near mess halls where people waited in line for meals three times a day. The most elaborate garden was Merritt Park, which Tak Muto, Kuichiro Nishi, and their crew built as Manzanar's community park. In 2008, the Nishi family helped park staff remove decades of soil to reveal the park.

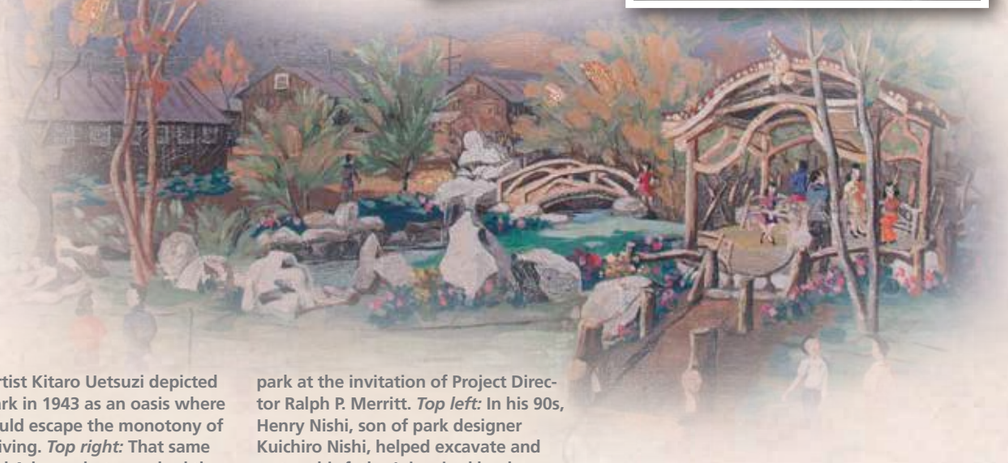
The National Park Service continues to uncover and preserve historic features, including elements of the early 1900s farming town of Manzanar. This land is home to the Owens Valley Paiute, whose own stories have been passed down through millennia and are an important part of the history of Manzanar.

There is not much there anymore in the way of structures . . . but a lot of memories remain.

Miho Sumi Shiroishi

LEFT—NPS / MANZ; BELOW—LIBRARY OF CONGRESS / ANSEL ADAMS





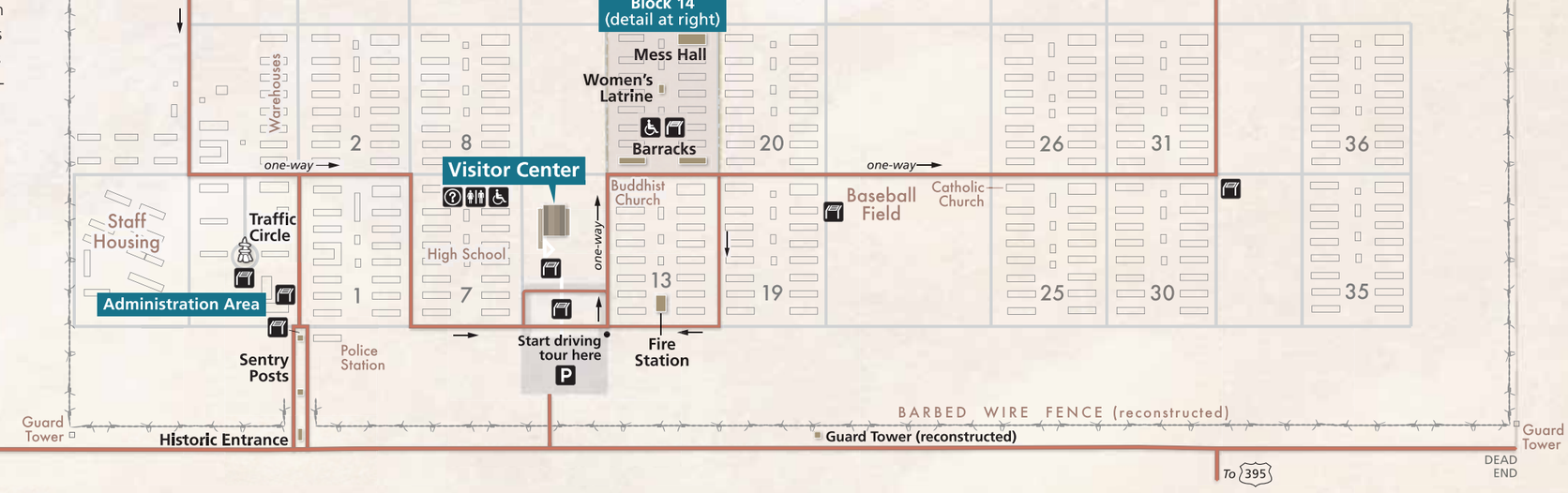
Above: Artist Kitaro Uetsuzi depicted Merritt Park in 1943 as an oasis where people could escape the monotony of barracks living. *Top right:* That same year, Ansel Adams photographed the park at the invitation of Project Director Ralph P. Merritt. *Top left:* In his 90s, Henry Nishi, son of park designer Kuichiro Nishi, helped excavate and restore his father's inspired landscape.

NPS / MANZ, NISHI FAMILY COLLECTION

TO READ MANZANAR'S LANDSCAPE, LOOK FOR:

- Rocks arranged to personalize barracks "yards" or create gardens
- Sidewalks that led to doorways
- Water pipes that stood at corners of barracks
- Concrete foundations of latrines, laundry rooms, and ironing rooms
- Concrete blocks that supported barracks

Many pieces from Manzanar's past lie scattered on the ground. It is against federal law to disturb or collect these items.



Driving safety and regulations

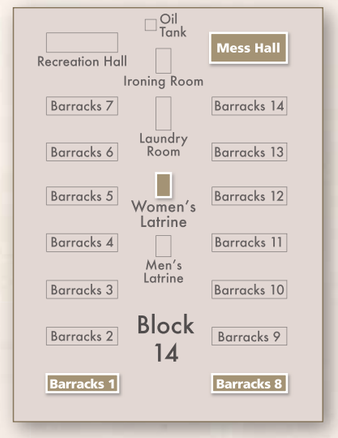
- Please respect the 15 mph speed limit.
- Stay on the pavement and do not cut corners.
- Watch out for fellow visitors.
- Do not park on vegetation, even if it appears dead. This fragile desert environment takes years to recover.

Buddhist Reverend Shinjo Nagatomi conducts a service at the cemetery.

TOYO MIYATAKE / COURTESY ALAN MIYATAKE

Cemetery Monument

Catholic stonemason Ryozo Kado built this obelisk in 1943 with help from residents of Block 9 and the Young Buddhist Association. On the east face, Buddhist Reverend Shinjo Nagatomi inscribed *kanji* characters that mean "soul consoling tower." People attended religious services here during the war. Today the monument is a focal point of the annual pilgrimage, serving as a symbol of solace and hope.



City of Barracks

Manzanar was arranged into 36 blocks. In most blocks, up to 300 people crowded into 14 barracks. Initially, each barracks had four rooms with eight people per room. Everyone ate in a mess hall, washed clothes in a public laundry room, and shared latrines and showers with little privacy. The ironing room and recreation hall offered spaces for classes, shops, and churches. Over time, people personalized their barracks and most blocks evolved into distinct communities.

Property Clerk Mildred Causey and her daughter Ann pose at the traffic circle, next to the administration building.

FRED CAUSEY / COURTESY ARTHUR L. WILLIAMS

Administration Area

Over 200 War Relocation Authority (WRA) staff—and often their families—lived and worked here, trying to reconcile directives from Washington, DC, with the realities of managing an incarcerated community. Erica Harth recalled, "The administrative section where we lived was literally white. Its white painted bungalows stared across at the rows of brown tarpaper barracks." Scores of Japanese Americans also worked in WRA offices.

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Let It Not Happen Again

I have come to a conclusion after many, many years that we must learn from our history and we must learn that history can teach us how to care for one another. **Rose Hanawa Tanaka**

The story of Manzanar has not ended—Japanese Americans and others keep it alive. At age 95, Fumiko Hayashida testified before Congress to support the *Nidoto Nai Yoni* ("Let it not happen again") memorial on Bainbridge Island, Washington. She was photographed at that site in 1942, holding her daughter—an image that became an icon of the World War II Japanese American experience. At age 100, Fumiko returned to Manzanar with her daughter Natalie for the first time since World War II (*left*). Today, thousands of people who visit Manzanar and other sites of conscience feel connected to these places and their stories (*right*). At Manzanar, some see their own struggles reflected in the injustices that over 10,000 Japanese Americans faced here.

COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS, CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

MORE INFORMATION

The Manzanar Visitor Center features exhibits about the camp and area history, plus a film and bookstore. Block 14 includes exhibits about the challenges of daily life. The grounds are open daily, sunrise to sunset. Check the park website for visitor center hours, programs, events, and special exhibits.

Safety and Regulations It is against federal law to disturb or collect artifacts. • Drive only on the designated tour road; see additional tour regulations in red on the map. • Wear sturdy footwear, a hat, and sunscreen. • Drink lots of water. • Pets are allowed outside if leashed. • Firearms are prohibited in federal buildings.

Emergencies dial 911

Accessibility We strive to make facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Manzanar National Historic Site
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Independence, CA 93526
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www.nps.gov/manz

Follow us on Facebook.

The National Park Service cares for other Japanese American World War II sites: Tule Lake (CA), Minidoka (ID), Honouliuli (HI), and a memorial on Bainbridge Island (WA).

Manzanar National Historic Site is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about your national parks, visit www.nps.gov.

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